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Interest in "The Inner Shrine"* has been much stimulated by the announcement that it is the work of a well-known novelist whose name is not divulged. It has been attributed to Edith Wharton, Mrs. Humphry Ward and to Amélie Rives. That it is a woman's book no concealment can make us doubt, and but for the quality of a measured restraint, self-suppression and absence of the Virginia heroine we should be inclined to believe it to be the work of Amélie Rives. But if it is it means that this writer has gone industriously to school to Mrs. Wharton. The story has in it the excellencies of both writers, the care and the craftsmanlike structure of the one and the emotional fervor of the other. The heroine, half Irish and half French, has in her that strange blend of dreamy recklessness and gallant courage which might easily mark a high-bred Norman and Celt descent. Throughout the story she holds our sympathies by being really nobler than she is to outer seeming. The opening in the fast Parisian set and the transference to the old families in New York show a good knowledge of varying social ideals. It is a good story well told, and the analysis of the opposed racial ideals of honor is very acute.

Nothing in connection with recent American letters has been more delightful than to watch the steady growth and flowering of Miss Alice Brown's genius. Delicate, exquisite, but very shy at first, it has increased in scope and quality till it would be difficult to find another American story-writer to be called her equal. No one, remembering "The Day of His Youth," touched with poetic dream-perception, as it was, could have foreseen so fine a novel as "Rose McLeod." It was a delightful story, but it was so much more than a story; it was a wonderfully varied, moving bit of life caught and reproduced, with the poet's and the painter's glamour added. Florrie, the gay old lady of seventy-two, still busy with her love-affairs and her literary hoaxes and her sense of the sheer fun of living, was an achievement not easily paralleled. "The Story of Thyrza"† is a painting of lower life on a narrower canvas. Thyrza is the daughter of a poor village tailoress—a type of pure goodness, high thinking and plain living difficult to find

* "The Inner Shrine." By ?. Messrs. Harper & Brothers, 1909.

† "The Story of Thyrza." By Alice Brown. Houghton, Mifflin Co., 1909.

outside of small New England villages. There are two sisters, Laura, commonplace, pretty, kindly, matter-of-fact, and Thyrsa, fiery, idealistic, high-hearted, ambitious. She is betrayed through the very innocence and nobility of her nature by the man who afterwards becomes her sister's husband. Though betrayed by her innocence, Thyrsa pronounces her own judgment and inflicts her own penalty. For twenty years she follows her mother's trade in a small university town and brings up and educates her son. Hers is a noble and exalted character, and she reaps the blessing in the end of those who have hungered and thirsted after righteousness.

This same theme of a woman's fatal mistake has been handled in late years by three American women, Mrs. Deland, Mrs. Anne Sedgwick and Miss Brown. In the two latter cases the women take their fatal mistakes heavily and willingly expiate them, but there is in Miss Brown's a nobler purpose, a higher spirituality. As for the love-story, there is a story of real love running alongside the story of sin and mistake almost as exquisite as Rose's love-story. The final love scene of the dying Barton Gorse and Thyrsa is one of Miss Brown's own inimitable touches.

"Silly, silly," says the dying man. "Everything is silly but being kind." One remembers that when, a generation ago, one of George Eliot's characters said, "Kindness is my religion" it seemed a bold and radical utterance, but to-day it is a truism that the best of religion and the best of life is the kindly service of man.

Marion Crawford is dead, and his work is finished. By all accounts and to all seeming he was the best and most companionable of men, and he was visibly a most industrious writer. In twenty-eight years he wrote over forty novels. In fifty years George Meredith wrote about half that number. Those who remember the vitality and exuberant fancy in "Mr. Isaacs" and "Dr. Claudius" cannot but feel that whatever Mr. Crawford may have gained in character by his unremitting industry he lost in genius and vitality by forcing his gift.

The plot of the "White Sister"* is good, but the characters are shadowy and unreal, and the telling of the tale is bald. We

* "The White Sister." By Marion Crawford. The Macmillan Company, 1909.